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ABSTRACT

This monograph contends that the same ethnic preoccupation that is pervading politics in the United States today is also dangerously affecting our educational system. Specifically, pluralistic demands placed on American schools are moving them away from the historical objectives of unifying, providing a common experience for a diverse population, establishing democratic ideals and devotion to civic duty, and providing basic vocational preparation. Examples of 'pluralism gone mad' (defined as any attempt to introduce, on the basis of social equity, programs that divert the educational process from the democratic goals and principles to which it is historically committed) include separation of curriculum, activities, or services on the basis of race, ethnic background, or sex; bilingual education aimed at supporting a jobs program rather than valid educational purposes; accommodation of the idiosyncratic values and personal behavior of every individual; educational reform based on evangelism or spiritualism; attempts to make all learning activities relevant and immediately gratifying; and attempts to meet the curriculum desires of every special interest group and every political persuasion. Several recommendations are offered to guide reform of the educational system, including establishing parent governance committees at each school, strengthening the quality of teacher preparation, supporting affirmative action programs that lead to the employment of the best qualified persons regardless of race or sex, and improving student achievement. The conclusion is that the agenda of American schools should be to concentrate on quality rather than pluralism. (DB)

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PLURALISM GONE MAD

FASTBACK 160

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Phi Delta Kappa
Educational Foundation

SO 013 383

Pluralism Gone Mad

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Series Editor, Derek L. Burleson

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This fastback is sponsored by the Ohio State University Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa through a generous financial contribution by one of its members, Miss Bessie Gabbard.

Introduction

America is in headlong retreat from its commitment to education. Political confusion and economic uncertainty have shaken the people's faith in education as the key to financial and social success . . . at stake is nothing less than the survival of American democracy.

—Fred Hechinger

In discussing ethnic politics, *Newsweek* columnist Meg Greenfield stated, "We aren't dealing here with pluralism or anything so grand and political sciencelike, but rather with pluralism gone mad." Her point is that politicians are carrying ethnic politics to extremes. The author of this fastback contends that the same ethnic preoccupation that is pervading politics is also dangerously affecting our educational system. Pluralistic demands placed upon our schools, from either the political left or right, misdirect our efforts to create a just society—a nation of people, not blacks, Chicanos, whites, or Asians.

Educational revisionists and traditionalists have different points of view about what constitutes equal educational opportunity. Traditionalists believe that the basic purposes of schools were articulated for them from the very beginning of our nation—to unify, to provide a common experience for a diverse population, to establish democratic ideals, and to provide vocational preparation. They view the U.S. as a land of great opportunity, a country where each person can find success through initiative, hard work, self-reliance, devotion to civic duty, adherence to the laws of God, and above all, by obtaining a good education. Education equips one to climb the ladder of vocational success, to

obtain the material rewards of life, and to live well in retirement. Those who do not do well in school are destined to remain in unskilled jobs, live on the edge of poverty, and be dependent on others in their old age.

At the other end of the continuum are the educational revisionists. They see the fulfillment of equal educational opportunity in terms of multicultural education, bilingual education, intergroup education, global education, values clarification and other efforts to help individual students, particularly minorities, achieve personal, economic, and social success. They suggest that schools have been massively insensitive to the needs of the poor, minorities, and women. They contend that schools have perpetuated a social class system and have not provided equal educational opportunity for large segments of our population. Further, they criticize educators for promoting the melting pot theory in their attempts to "Americanize" immigrant children.

The thesis of this fastback is that schools have been and will continue to be the cornerstone of an effective political democracy and a safe moral society. They are the poetry and soul of our country. The poetry does not always have perfect meter; it is more in the style of Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg. The dream is not a complete reality, but it is in the making. Although reform is needed, it is not necessary to dismantle our schools in order to bring about change. Somewhere along the continuum, between the ideologies of traditionalism and revisionism, lies reality.

In attempting to illustrate that reality, the author will discuss what is meant by educational pluralism gone mad, criticize changes that he perceives to be contradictory to the historical purposes of public schools, and recommend steps to insure the preservation and continuation of the American ethos.

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Two Views of American Education

The same reality may appear quite different
to diverse groups and individuals.
—David Tyack

Traditionalists believe that schools have made a massive contribution to the success of our nation, that they have given high priority to basic historical principles upon which this nation was founded: equal opportunity, equal protection under the law, equal access to economic sufficiency, freedom of choice, and a long list of personal liberties. Although these principles have not been extended to all our citizens throughout our history, nor been adhered to and supported by all our leaders, they are always there. Written into our basic documents, interpreted by our courts, articulated by our political and educational leaders, they are always nagging at our consciences, confronting our actions, and pressing us to noble purposes. And they continue to be taught by our teachers and practiced in our schools better than anywhere else in our society.

Our forefathers believed that a government of the people, by the people, and for the people would not work unless supported by a system of free public education for all children. This belief that the young were to be educated in the American system did not grow out of kindness, humanitarianism, or concern for justice. It was a conclusion that was reached out of the desire to survive. If this nation could not exist half free and half slave, it could not exist half schooled and half unschooled. All the nation's young must be schooled. Thomas Jefferson, as trustee for the University of Virginia, argued the necessity for

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teaching an American ethos, free from the corruption of European political ideas.

That our schools have done well in teaching the American system is abundantly clear. Representative government has survived and survived well. Our Bill of Rights is still in center stage despite McCarthyism, Nixon, and the book censors of the 1980s. The Supreme Court is still supreme. The people still enjoy the vote in deciding who will govern and who will not. These principles of government could not have been sustained without schools, without men and women who understood democracy, who knew their rights, and who could confront the system. Education makes it possible for citizens to control their government, modify their laws, and adjust to historical changes.

Traditionalists believe that schools have made a major contribution in upholding ethical values in our society. An open society requires that schools teach obedience to the law, a respect for property, and an adherence to a personal code of ethics. We can quarrel about the effectiveness of our current strategies to teach such behavior, but we cannot argue about the need to do so. It is the responsibility of schools to assist in making our society a safe place in which to live, a sane place in which to work, and a moral place in which to think.

Formerly schools contributed to the American ethos with the moral lessons found in McGuffey Readers. Today they struggle with values clarification, Kohlberg's stages of moral development, law-related education, character education, and ethics education. What has happened to the schools' ability to influence appropriate behavior? Is the morality of our nation so ambiguous that it can no longer be taught in our schools? Is it possible that pluralistic extremes have confused values, blurred lines between right and wrong, preached ethical relativism to the point that it impairs the ability of the schools to teach ethical behavior? As we will examine later, pluralism gone mad creates a society with a no-fault morality. It is the antithesis of constructive educational reform.

Revisionists place great importance on equality of educational opportunity, particularly for the poor, minorities, and women. They are active promoters of special programs in our schools that assure greater economic, social, and personal success for all students. Re-

visionists, recognizing the increasing numbers of ethnic backgrounds in our society, suggest that understanding these various heritages can be an enriching experience for all students. To this end they advocate pluralistic approaches to education under such labels as multiethnic education, intergroup education, global education, and bilingual education.

Revisionists suggest that in the past schools have failed to respond to the needs of our growing ethnic population and have not provided equality of educational opportunity. They document the failure of schools by citing the difference between blacks and whites in income, by showing that minorities and women do not attain high positions of leadership, and by demonstrating that the school dropout rate is higher for minorities than it is for whites. They present information that shows that the schools have historically been controlled by white, middle-class males. They point out that upward social mobility is largely an illusion and that class position has been rigidly maintained in our country.

Interpreting history is a difficult assignment. Both traditionalists and revisionists have a tendency to report only the ends of the continuum. What is not clearly established are the contributions of education to blacks, to the Spanish-speaking, and to native Americans. Diane Ravitch makes a strong case for blacks enjoying greater economic success than in the past. In her book, *The Revisionists Revised: Critique of the Radical Attack on the Schools*, she offers data that indicate that more blacks are now moving up to equity with whites than ever before. Revisionists, however, refute her work and present data to show that economic parity has been obtained by only a small percentage of blacks, Spanish-speaking, and native Americans. Further, unemployment figures continue to show that minorities are unemployed in disproportionate numbers compared to whites. In some areas 40% of inner-city young minorities are unemployed. As expressed by Harvey Kantor in *Revisionists Respond to Ravitch*, ". . . such [minimal] advancement may act to defuse unrest by convincing many of the open nature of the economic system and the benevolence of the ruling elites." It is the revisionists' belief that our nation can survive and prosper only if our educational system responds positively to the growing needs of our pluralistic society.

The literature, however, fails to articulate the difference between educated minorities and those who do not do well in school and drop out. Minorities who graduate from high school and college do find jobs. Those who do not graduate remain unemployed or are employed at low paying jobs. The National School Public Relations Association reports in *What's Right With Education?* that "Sixty percent of the occupational gains made by blacks in the last decade were due to higher levels of education. In the eleven years from 1965 to 1976, there was a more than 25% increase in the enrollment of blacks in colleges and universities." It is obvious that we must continue to find ways to keep minorities in school and to motivate them to graduate. Concomitantly we must take a strong look at the values of the general society that do not provide enough jobs for young people, that permit the waste of human talents, and that still discriminate against minorities and women in many areas.

Those who are interested in a supportive view regarding the school's role in the economic success of minorities may wish to read Mark Krug's *The Melting of the Ethnics* and Arthur J. Newman's *In Defense of the American Public School*. Opposing points of view are represented in the works of Harvey Kantor, Michael Katz, and Samuel Bowles. The works of David Tyack endorse "neither the euphoric glorification of public education as represented in the traditional historiography nor the current fashion of berating public school people and regarding the common school as a failure."

While, in my opinion, both revisionists and traditionalists fall short of presenting a careful and realistic history of public schools, they do agree that there are problems that are not being met by our schools today. There are not enough jobs for young people; discriminatory practices against minorities and women continue; violence in our schools is rising; teenage pregnancies are more frequent. What kinds of educational reform are needed to reduce these problems, and how much of the responsibility appropriately belongs to the school and how much belongs to other social institutions?

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Pluralism Gone Mad

We aren't dealing here with pluralism or
anything so grand and political sciencelike,
but rather with pluralism gone mad.
—Meg Greenfield

Pluralism gone mad may be defined as any attempt to introduce, on the basis of social equity, programs that divert the educational process from the democratic goals and principles to which it is historically committed. Some examples of pluralism gone mad are:

1. Separation of curriculum, activities, or services on the basis of race, ethnic background, or sex.
2. Bilingual education aimed at supporting a jobs program rather than valid educational purposes.
3. Moral relativism that accommodates the idiosyncratic values and personal behavior of every individual.
4. Educational reform based on evangelism or spiritualism.
5. Attempts to make all learning activities relevant and immediately gratifying.
6. Multicultural education that overloads the teacher and produces instructional superficiality.
7. Attempts to meet the curriculum desires of every special interest group and every political persuasion.

Separatism

Minorities and ethnic groups have pressured schools to establish separate courses and activities that isolate students by race or ethnic origin. Courses such as Black Studies, Chicano History, or Native

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American Dance, when offered only to special groups of students, perpetuate segregation. Black honor societies, Spanish soccer teams, and Sons of Italy festivals are equally misguided efforts. The tokenism of Black History Week, Spanish Heritage Day, or Italian-American Month is a poor substitute for genuine curriculum integration of minority contributions to the history of our nation. An in-depth study for all students of Martin Luther King in social studies and A.P. Giannini in economics would serve the purposes of education far better. The contributions of Marconi or Booker T. Washington or Caesar Chavez or Ella Flagg Young to the history of our nation, studied by all students in integrated classes, is far superior to establishing token courses for each racial and ethnic group or, for that matter, the "peculiar needs of women."

Furthermore, not every minority who ever lived is worthy of being studied in school; nor is every trivial historical event a source of pride for minorities, women, or ethnic groups. And it is yet to be established that the study of black English or the study of any dialect or regional language helps children to succeed in school. We should follow the advice of Ricardo Garcia who cautions us to examine carefully the curriculum that purports to teach respect for individuals and cultural differences but which stresses "ethnocentrism which leads to separation, exclusivity, and fragmentation of our society."

The condescending attitude that the "poor, under-motivated minorities and ethnics" need "special instruction" in "isolated courses" taught by "ethnic models" is a form of bigotry. It is the stuff out of which racism rises and discrimination is legitimatized. It would be better to concentrate our efforts on reforming the total curriculum and upgrading our teacher-training programs. Educators need to understand better the laws of our nation as they apply to schools and become more literate about the various peoples who contribute to the greatness of this nation. What is needed is reform of the mainstream curriculum and reform in the governance of education.

Bilingual Jobs Programs

When bilingual education is discussed, it is often difficult to separate educational strategies from the employment needs of minorities.

In January 1974 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Lau v. Nichols* that: "Students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education." The unanimous decision of the Court, written by Justice William O. Douglas, ordered the city of San Francisco to help Chinese children in the schools master English. It did not mandate the employment of people based on ethnic origin. What it did say was that children could not learn if they did not understand English.

The aim of bilingual education is to help children learn to speak English. Unfortunately, the courts have confused this obligation of the public schools with the employment needs of the nation. In *Serna v. Portales* and *Aspiro of New York v. Board of Education* the courts required bilingual instruction and the employment of more Spanish-speaking teachers. In *Otera v. Mesa County Valley School* and *Guadelupe Organization v. Tempe Elementary School District* the courts said that children had no constitutional right to bilingual/bicultural education beyond "measures to cure existing language deficiencies" or "as a remedy for discrimination." The confusion of various court decisions and resulting demands and pressures from federal regulations prevent local school districts from providing effective assistance to children with language problems.

The foregoing should not be construed to mean that bilingual education is not needed. Rather, it is a plea to permit local districts to decide how best to implement the *Lau* decision and to hold them responsible for doing so. The goal is to improve students' proficiency in English, not to employ specific people to achieve that proficiency.

Moral Relativism

Pluralism in our society has produced a moral climate that tells everyone to establish a sense of what is right and wrong *for you*. This trend has a way of blurring the limits of a moral code. In the educational arena this trend has produced a no-fault morality and relativistic values. Jeb Stuart Magruder's testimony before the Senate is an example of such moral confusion. He justified Watergate because of national security. The election of Nixon, he reasoned, was so important that it should be accomplished at all costs, even illegal means. In

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schools we see the same reasoning in relationship to cheating, especially for those who wish to attend prestigious colleges. "The trend toward pluralistic ethics has produced too many people willing to put success ahead of personal standards and cleverness ahead of character," said Ewald Nyquist, former New York State Commissioner of Education.

Schools, if they are to survive, must protect and articulate moral standards, ethical behavior, and historical principles of social cohesion. It is their function to teach the common beliefs that unite us as a free nation.

Spiritual Reform

It has become fashionable to try to reform the schools by propounding evangelical mumbo-jumbo and catchy slogans. Those who want to reform the schools through "salvation" by returning prayer to the classroom, by burning "dirty books," by removing "secular humanism" from the curriculum seem to be oblivious to the First Amendment. School reform will not come about by seeing visions, experiencing revelations, shouting "amen" in assembly halls, or by submitting to the will of spiritual leaders. Myths have been used throughout history by despots and demagogues; they are not effective methods for improving schools. What is needed, instead, is hard work, regular attendance, adherence to rules and regulations, respect for teachers, and a desire to learn—all of which are congruent with quality education.

Irrelevancy of Relevance

The pluralistic demands on teachers to make the curriculum "relevant" have resulted in many irrelevant courses and learning activities. The trend toward mini-courses, real-life courses, fun courses, and ethnic courses generally provides shallow knowledge and reduces a student's time for more serious educational opportunities. According to the National Association of Secondary School Principals, schools that have maintained high achievement, in both urban and rural settings, have also maintained strong requirements for graduation. They have *not* substituted so-called "relevant" courses for traditional ones.

Further, the quest for relevancy has weakened standards of good teaching. It has brought to the classroom trivia, diversions, and excessive dependency on television programs. The money could be better used to reduce class size or employ aides to help teachers.

A quality education may not overcome all the handicaps of poverty, but it will go a long way toward providing equal access to good jobs. This is far more important than justifying mediocre television programs in the name of relevancy.

Multicultural Overload

The study of cultural differences provides many opportunities for teaching basic principles of tolerance, respect, and appreciation of differences; but if the schools are expected to teach the cultures of all groups and the preferences of all political persuasions in our nation, then the curriculum will become so overloaded that little of substance will be accomplished.

It is encouraging to see a trend in the reduction of courses rather than the proliferation of them. What was once a smorgasbord of independent, fragmented multicultural courses is now becoming an integrated history program that includes the important contributions of all people. An example of such consolidation is the effort of Westminster College in Salt Lake City. As described by Dean Douglas W. Steeples in the 22 September 1980 issue of the *Salt Lake Tribune*, the college will do the following:

1. Cut the number of classes nearly in half.
2. Limit the number of available degrees.
3. Place greater emphasis on writing, mathematics, and computer science.
4. Continue a strong program in liberal arts.
5. Instill in all students a sense of ethical responsibility.

It is hoped that many more schools and colleges will follow this path and incorporate ethnic studies into the mainstream curriculum.

Special Interest Pressures

One need only attend school board meetings to understand how extensive the demands of vested interest groups are on our schools. One group wants teachers to dispense calcium tablets; another requests that

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teachers supervise a flouridation rinse. Special interest groups want to use students to collect money, sell candles, distribute posters and literature. Various other groups plead for every kind of service, ranging from babysitting in the late afternoon to door-to-door transportation service. Such pluralistic demands come not only from the public but from individual board members as well. Such single issue requests could destroy the effectiveness of boards of education and prevent them from giving appropriate leadership to the schools.

Special interest pressures on the schools must be balanced with the needs of the entire school. Continued concern for the special interests of every group at the expense of the general population is the kind of pluralism which makes it impossible for the schools to provide good education for everyone.

Summary

Pluralism gone mad is eroding the ability of public schools to do their jobs well. In their attempts to create egalitarian environments, they have established token opportunities for blacks, the Spanish-speaking, native Americans, and others. This is not only detrimental to quality education and equal opportunity for all students but is especially harmful to the minorities for which they were established.

Pluralism gone mad in the schools is seen in the establishment of separate courses for minorities, attempts to be relevant, excessive concern for vested interests, proliferation of courses, moral relativism, confusion between education and jobs programs. These kinds of pluralism have not improved educational opportunities for minority groups; instead, they have created confusion, ambivalence, and fear.

A renewed emphasis on the historical traditions of our nation, based on the democratic principles embedded in our national documents, may provide better results. However, providing quality education for all is not an easy task. It requires aggressive men and women, educators who are committed to narrowing the gap between principles and practice. Schools need not be dismantled in order to improve them. Proposals for de-schooling, rampant pluralism, and devisive attacks on our schools do need to be understood, but they should not be the basis for reform.

Pluralism and Educational Reform

Education in a liberal society must sustain and hold in balance ideals that coexist in tension: equality and excellence.
—Diane Ravitch

Schools are limited institutions. They have not always fulfilled all of our expectations. In areas where they have not served well, they should be improved. But attempts to improve them often create a conflict between the ideal of equality and the desire for excellence. A case in point is the push to assure every student a high school diploma and the concomitant pressure to strengthen graduation standards. Likewise, a balance is needed: 1) between equity for school employees and accountability for providing quality education; 2) between safeguarding constitutional rights of students and providing appropriate teaching and learning conditions; 3) between the rights of parents to influence the schools and appropriate processes for doing so; 4) between cultural needs and curriculum limitations; 5) between what the schools can do and what other agencies of society should do; 6) between federal control and local responsibility; 7) between educational finance and public accountability. Let's examine each of these seven items.

Employee Equity and Accountability

A basic principle articulated in our schools is that employees will be treated fairly and that their due process rights will be protected. Unfortunately this has not always been the case; and as long as unfair practices exist, employees will continue to organize and to negotiate greater and greater security measures. The result is extended conflict, which

leaves little time to improve schools. What is needed is a delicate balance between employee equity and the ability of boards of education to establish quality education.

This balance can be established through a system of shared governance. Shared governance gives employees an opportunity to participate in the governance of the school district and helps to make boards of education more responsive to the needs of employees. It also establishes orderly procedures for resolving conflict and for developing strategies to improve schools. Without shared governance public confidence in the schools declines, and pluralistic demands increase. Legislatures become oppressive. Parent unions are formed. Dissatisfaction is currently evident in state legislative efforts to reform teacher certification, to test teachers, to extended probationary periods, to repeal tenure laws, to offer only short-term contracts to administrators, and to establish evaluation of all educational personnel. Faced with a hostile environment, school employees have become more concerned with safety and security than with providing better education for students. Clearly reform in the area of governance is needed.

Students' Rights and Appropriate Conditions for Teaching and Learning

Protecting the constitutional rights of students is often confused with establishing sound teaching and learning conditions. Thus the complaint heard so often is that the courts are running our schools or that the courts "won't let us do anything." Courts clarify the constitutional rights of our citizens, but they generally have no interest in or desire to run the schools. That responsibility is left to boards of education and school officials.

In line with their responsibilities educators must not require children to pray in school, ignore due process procedures, discriminate on the basis of race, sex, ethnic group, economic position, or handicap. At the same time, children may pray if they wish, if such praying does not interfere with teaching and learning. Similarly, schools cannot deny the expression of free speech, even in symbolic manner (pins, armbands, etc.); but schools can control such expressions by limiting them to certain hours or specific places. Reform in this area is not permissiveness when it establishes a school ethos that protects students' rights and at the same time protects the conditions for teaching and learning.

Unfortunately many educators have either given up or believe that it is appropriate to create a "soft" environment for students, especially minorities. Thus, extreme behaviors are tolerated at the expense of a positive learning environment. Such misguided attitudes are harmful to all students and especially to minorities whom they were intended to help.

Balance in this area is possible if school personnel teach clearly the difference between historical rights to freedom of expression and the abuse of such rights when it interferes with the rights of others to learn. Denial of rights creates repression, hostility, conflict, lawsuits, and a host of school district problems. On the other hand, pluralistic preoccupation with expression of rights reduces education to a confusion of individual whims. Equality of educational opportunity can best be provided by high expectations, protection of constitutional rights, and appropriate control of the conditions for teaching and learning. It isn't easy, but it is right.

Parent Participation in Decision Making

Placing responsibility and decision making at the school building level is one of the keys to better schools. Parent participation is especially needed when making important educational decisions for students. Michael Timpane writing in *The Search for Effective Schools, HGSEAB*, (Vol. XXV, No. 1, Fall 1980) argues that what happens at the school building level (principal leadership, staff sophistication, parent participation, home/school partnership programs, local planning) is what motivates schools to improve. It is also at this point that the restoration of public confidence in schools can occur. By establishing governance at the school unit level, we can lessen the demands on central boards of education and improve schools at the same time.

Ronald Edmonds in his article, "Effective Schools for Urban Poor," *Educational Leadership* (October 1979), supports this point of view in a summary of research on effective urban schools.

1. They have strong administrative leadership.
2. They have a climate of high expectation.

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3. They have order without rigidity and purpose without oppression.

4. They have strong programs for learning basic skills.

5. School energy and resources are used to promote fundamental objectives.

6. They monitor pupil progress on a regular basis.

Decentralized governance allows the board of education to establish standards of excellence but gives local schools freedom to implement those standards. When standards are not achieved, the board will intervene in the governance process and take corrective action. Consequently, standards become the criteria for evaluating effectiveness, and evaluation becomes a joint responsibility of the board of education and the local schools.

Such a partnership can lessen pluralistic demands on central boards of education. Decisions as to what can and cannot be done will be understood better when one is responsible for implementing those decisions and for allocating funds to support the decisions. It can contribute also to establishing harmony between superintendents and boards of education. All of this should contribute to orderly operations and better education.

Cultural Needs and Curriculum Limitations

Curriculum reform is needed to include the many people who have made enormous contributions to our nation, especially blacks, the Spanish-speaking, and native Americans. These groups have been historically forgotten. Ricardo Garcia calls these the "unmeltable" persons of our society. If we are to reform curriculum successfully, however, we cannot respond to every request out of historical guilt. We do not need separate courses, but we do need to incorporate minority history into the regular programs of the school. We must find a proper balance between important persons and events and a desire to right the wrongs of yesterday. Sophie A. Welisch, in her article, "Ethnic Education: Promise and Peril" in *Equality and Liberty in Education*, says:

> Ethnic studies around the country show a promising beginning in the direction of pluralism. However, in an attempt to compensate the minorities, some programs have emphasized the positive values of ethnicity without discussing its negative aspects. All racial bias does not reside in white middle-class America; the ethnics, too, have prejudices which might be intensified by a narrow conceptualization of their grievances. Moreover, ethnic programs often presuppose the existence of monolithic groups and ignore variations of class, sex, occupation, and age as well as the racially mixed backgrounds of many Americans. Some programs, especially Black studies, have often been introduced hastily, poorly integrated into the American history curriculum or isolated from it, and handled very uncritically. Without a strong commitment to the traditions and objectives which bind us together as a nation, the forces of alienation and separatism will invariably strengthen.

We must continue to incorporate minority content in every curriculum area where it is appropriate: in history, social studies, art, music, in literature, science, and mathematics. Reform in these areas requires a comprehensive re-examination of all areas of study. In the long run, I believe that strong, progressive, curriculum reform will improve education for minorities more than busing, racial balance, or equalizing per pupil expenditures.

The conflicts created by demands for bilingual/bicultural education have deterred or misdirected schools from doing the more important job of curriculum reform. Similarly, accusing school employees of being "racist and unconcerned" has made them resistant to participation in appropriate restructuring of the curriculum. It is time to put the allegations and conflict aside and to start curriculum reform that will give proper attention to ethnic and racial minorities and to women.

Responsibility of Schools and of Other Agencies

Schools cannot do all that people believe they should do. At the same time, they can fulfill their responsibilities better with the cooperation of other social institutions. For example, we can educate handicapped children but we cannot alleviate their health problems; that is a responsibility of the health agencies. We can educate minorities but not without regular attendance; responsibility for regular attendance belongs to the parents as much as it does to the school.

Schools do not operate in a vacuum. Television, church, parents, jobs, sports, social activities—all of these compete for students' time and energy. It might be wise, therefore, to form alliances where each

institution educates in those areas that it can do best. The private sector can help teach driver education. The medical profession can assist with sex education. The legal profession can help with law-related education. Business and industry can teach vocational education, and utility companies can assist with energy conservation education. There are unlimited partnerships that can be created to relieve the schools from being the single educational institution in the society.

The pluralism of expectations that crept into the schools during the Great Society days of Lyndon Johnson was unfortunate. Expecting schools to win the war on racism, on poverty, and on social injustice was unrealistic. However, schools can help to alleviate social problems by educating students to think, to get jobs, to appreciate freedom, and to understand the principles of democratic government. These are functions that schools can perform well. Other educational goals should be assumed by other social agencies. When such a balance of responsibility is established, both public and private agencies will do their jobs better.

Balance of Government Responsibility

The November 1980 *Phi Delta Kappan* reported that one of the major issues of 1980-81 is "big-brotherism by the fledgling Federal Education Department." Negative reaction to such big-brotherism is seen in the struggle between the Department and Congress over appropriate regulations covering sex discrimination, bilingual education, education for disadvantaged students, and programs for handicapped students under P.L. 94-142. Excessive regulatory imposition on public schools has created a strong congressional response to approve regulations before they are disseminated. The position of Congress is being supported by National School Board Association, American Federation of Teachers, American Association of School Administrators, and most education groups. It is generally supported by various parent groups.

Establishing a balance between the functions of local school districts and the federal government will not be easy, but in order to do so a number of myths must be dispelled. The myths are:

1. Local districts won't do anything unless forced to do so;

2. Local school districts don't have enough money to do anything;
3. The federal government is controlled by corrupt political appointees;
4. One cannot be trusted if he/she works in Washington;
5. Local school districts and the federal government have different objectives.

The truth of the matter is that both levels of government have strengths and weaknesses. What is needed is a differentiation of functions so that the strengths of both can be maximized. Federal agencies contribute most when they evaluate, give broad direction, and establish general policy. Local districts do best when they identify problems, develop programs, select appropriate instructional strategies, and account to the public for school expenditures.

The federal government should get out of its regulatory and inspection role and take on a moral leadership role. It should articulate the purposes of education, evaluate school quality, and establish standards. Local districts should be pressed to develop better school programs, improve standards, evaluate employees, and be accountable for results. The partnership between federal agencies and local school districts works well if local districts are given maximum freedom to achieve federal purposes.

Adequacy of Financial Support and Public Accountability

As long as there is a general feeling that schools are deteriorating, state legislatures will not be supportive of increasing school expenditures. Even though we may believe that adequate financial support should come first, educational improvement should take precedence. Our only choice is to improve what our schools do. Then they will be more valued. We must improve test scores, restore standards of conduct, build bridges with parents, decentralize governance, articulate high expectations, protect constitutional rights of students, and do well all those things that pluralistic demands and ambivalence of purpose have weakened. Then we can ask for more money.

Summary

Social equality, economic freedom, and personal success are not

possible without quality education. In establishing a balance between educational equity and educational quality, we must avoid continued fragmentation that weakens the school's ability to produce either equity or quality. Social objectives must be seen in their proper perspective—the schools can contribute to their achievement, but not if we permit extended pluralism to sap our strength, divide our purposes, divert our attention from what needs to be done.

A school ethos is needed that emanates from acts of justice, fairness, equality, and respect. Schools must teach and live ethical principles and at the same time adhere to high standards of excellence. It's time to stop the traditionalist/revisionist debate and get on with comprehensive curriculum reform.

Schools and the American Ethos

It means something to be a member of the human race.
It means something to be a part of homo sapiens.
It means something, if you like, to think of ourselves
as children of God. And it means something to be an
American, if our friends from other countries
will forgive that little remark.
—Dean Rusk, June 25, 1980
1980 Kiwanis International Convention

The United States of America is like a cluster of grapes. The separate, individual grapes are held together by a common stem. Each grape has freedom, limited only by its attachment to the stem. The individual grapes may be of different color, shape, or size. Each, however, has the strength of the whole, held together by the stem.

The simile may be too simple. It does, nevertheless, illustrate how our nation functions. Individual men and women, different in many ways, are bonded together by a common ethos. When separated from that ethos, both freedom and strength are lost. It is from the stem that one gains freedom and from the association with the whole that one obtains strength. So far as each is part of the whole, the system gives strength and freedom in return. Being a part of the whole gives each a sense of well-being in the knowledge that one is secure and is guaranteed the exercise of personal liberties. It also provides direction for common purposes.

What needs to be recognized is that the American experiment was based on something—it did not just happen. Those who founded this

nation wrote some important ideas into our national documents. It is those ideas that must be taught in our schools. It is those ideas that form the stem that provides freedom and security. It is an ethos that supports diversity with limits, a common language with freedom to learn any other language one wishes to learn, and a set of political principles that distinguishes us from all other nations. It was established against a background of abuse, exploitation, and political repression. It articulates the rights, responsibilities, and conditions under which this nation will exist. It has withstood the tests of a civil war, the assassination of national leaders, depression, corruption in high places, explosive growth, the agonies of Vietnam, and adjustment to scarcity. It has worked well.

It has now become fashionable for some to be super critical because our system has not solved all our problems nor worked effectively for everyone. The diversity of our political system does not lend itself to simple panaceas. Unresolved problems may be the penalty we pay for political democracy and personal liberties. What is important to remember, however, is that the American ethos has been the social bond that has held us together. The ethos consists of the following:

1. Belief in the worth and the perfectibility of human life on this earth;
2. Conviction that democratic societies have more to offer than totalitarian ones;
3. Faith in reason and in orderly solution of conflict between individuals and between nations;
4. Respect for knowledge and a strong commitment to education for all;
5. Protection of personal liberties within limits established by law;
6. Equal protection under the law and equal opportunity for personal and economic success.

The American ethos has sustained us for over 200 years. It has made it possible for us to survive many crises. And it will eventually lead us through the quicksand of pluralism gone mad. The problems of the 1980s are no more difficult than those of the 1880s or the 1780s. The problem of plenty has now become the problem of scarcity. The conquering of the wilderness is now the preservation of the environment.

But the ethos has not changed. Life is still sacred. Freedom is still valued. Opportunity is still possible. Education is still a necessity.

Further, our ethos is a balance between individual rights and the public good. While it respects diversity, it extracts conformity in some areas. While it encourages freedom, it places restrictions on all members of society. While it provides equal opportunity, it expects the individual to take advantage of existing opportunities. It is a fine and delicate balance. It works well.

I believe that the schools of the future will once again return to basic democratic ideas found in our national documents as a rich source for curricula, especially in the area of character or citizenship education. It is my belief that as we enter a third century as a free nation, the American ethos of freedom, opportunity, self-reliance, hard-work, adherence to law, respect for individuals, and commitment to rigorous standards will become the norm of our schools. Our schools and colleges can do much to enhance the quality of life for the students who attend them. We have a responsibility to help young people to learn appropriate skills and attitudes. We must have a strong determination to create schools that are just. We must continue our commitment to educate *all* children. Nothing that we do, however, is as important as teaching the American ethos. The ethos is the glue which holds us together. It is our strength. It is the basis for personal freedom. Without it, not much else is possible.

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Conclusions and Recommendations

Those who examine and evaluate the history of our schools do not always agree on the extent to which schools have contributed to our nation. Traditionalists tend to augment their virtues; revisionists tend to magnify their faults. There are some who credit the schools with more than they deserve; others expect of schools more than they can deliver. Regardless of where each is on the continuum, some agreement can be reached about the following:

1. Public schools have successfully assimilated millions of immigrants into the mainstream of the U.S.

2. Excessive pluralistic demands on schools have produced confusion between equal opportunity and quality education, particularly where minorities are concerned.

3. Schools have made a strong contribution to the economic growth of our nation and to the standard of living enjoyed by all.

4. Historical traditions and principles of freedom taught in public education have been and will continue to be the glue that holds us together as an effective political democracy.

5. Educational reform is needed which establishes a delicate balance between equality and excellence.

The following are recommendations to guide the reform of our educational system in this country while at the same time preserving the American ethos on which it is built.

1. Require a top school official in each district to be responsible for promoting equal educational opportunity with the authority to implement corrective action when needed.

2. Establish parent governance committees at each school site.

3. Reform teacher education programs to include stronger concentration on history, sociology, economics, and philosophy, and lengthen certification requirements to a five-year preparatory program. Colleges and school districts should form partnerships to strengthen the quality of teacher preparation.

4. Combine efforts of the education community to combat racism, anti-Semitism, and violations of human rights, first within its own ranks and then in the general society, by instituting review boards to examine practices.

5. Support affirmative action programs that lead to the employment of the best qualified persons regardless of race or sex.

6. Expect each school to accept the responsibility to teach moral behavior based on the principles of democracy.

7. Form partnerships with other social agencies to provide subsidiary services to students and to families.

8. Establish evaluation policies as part of the board of education's responsibilities, and see that evaluation of education processes and personnel performance is conducted annually.

9. Work with legislatures to protect the financial support of education.

10. Improve student achievement.

Thomas Jefferson once stated, "No government ought to be without censors, and where the press is free, none ever will." We can say the same for schools. No school ought to exist without critics. While critics may not always be right, they do alert us to our weaknesses.

For some time now educators have tried pluralism to improve the schools. It has not worked too well. It has intensified conflict and injected politics into the operation of our schools. In order to establish the quality of education and provide equal opportunity, especially for minorities, we need common purposes, not fragmentation. We need to talk more about what is right with the schools and less about their flaws and failures. The agenda of our schools should be to educate better than ever before. Quality is imperative; pluralism is not.

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